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Viewing cable 10BUDAPEST34, OPPOSITION LEADER VIKTOR ORBAN CONFIDENT OF

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
10BUDAPEST34	2010-01-22 11:03	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Budapest

Appears in these articles:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUDAPEST 000034

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE JAMIE MOORE.
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2015
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [HU](#)
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER VIKTOR ORBAN CONFIDENT OF
UPCOMING ELECTORAL VICTORY IN INTRODUCING MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Political Counselor Paul C. O'Friel
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Opposition Fidesz party leader Viktor Orban
is clearly confident of his victory in April's upcoming

national elections in which he hopes to crush the Socialist party. He is also confident that he can defeat any challenge by Jobbik, telling the Ambassador in their January 19 meeting that "The best defense against the extreme right is good governance by the center-right." The Ambassador welcomed the opportunity to work with Orban if his party wins the election as expected. END SUMMARY.

Lower turnout favors the right

¶2. (C) The Ambassador's introductory meeting with opposition party leader Viktor Orban found the Fidesz leader energetic and confident of his success in next April's national elections. Handicapping the political race, Orban said he was hoping for a low turnout, which had traditionally favored the right. Noting that he had won in 1998 with a 56 percent turnout, and lost in 2002 and 2006 with a 68 percent and 72 percent turnout, respectively, Orban said, "The best for us is no more than 62 percent, otherwise it starts sliding in the other direction."

¶3. (C) Enthusiastically parsing the electorate, Orban described the typical Fidesz voter as committed politically, married, better-educated, employed, home-owning, not dependent on state largess, and wanting more economic freedom. The typical Socialist voter, according to Orban, is largely apathetic politically, not as well-educated, from a lower socio-economic class, and dependent on the state whether for a pension or an unemployment check. The problem the Socialist party leadership, whom Orban derisively called "billionaire ex-Communist nomenklatura," faced was how to mobilize and energize their base.

¶4. (C) Using the example of the Socialist party billboards springing up around Budapest, Orban observed that the Socialist party's logo was tucked away in a corner. Fidesz candidate billboards, however, proudly boasted of their party affiliation.

Going for the jugular

¶5. (C) Displaying his go-for-the-jugular political instincts, Orban vehemently seconded, "Yeah, we'll crush them," when his senior foreign policy advisor, Janos Martonyi, predicted that the Socialists would only get between 15 and 25 percent of the vote and perhaps disintegrate as a political party. The Socialists' demise, Orban said, would be for "the good of the country," since the party only reflected the interests of former Communist party elite.

¶6. (C) Orban was dismissive of his competitors, saying that none of them had any "political weight." "No one has heard of (Socialist Party prime ministerial candidate) Attila Mesterhazy," Orban said. He vowed he would not compromise with the Socialists once he attained power. "We (Fidesz) stand for values. My base would never support any deal with the (ex)Communists."

Good governance best defense against extremism

¶7. (C) Orban was equally dismissive of the far-right Jobbik party, saying, "They don't have any programs; all they have to sell is hate and intolerance. If you want a program, you have to turn to us." Orban noted that throughout Europe only the center-right was capable of taking on and defeating extremist movements. "Look at Chirac and Le Pen in France," he said, adding, "The best defense against the extreme right is good governance by the center-right." (Note: Martonyi predicts that Jobbik will obtain 8-12 percent of the vote. End Note.)

¶8. (C) Looking ahead to his anticipated victory, Orban said what he hoped to do was inject a new sense of optimism and

security in Hungary. The challenge, however, was to govern effectively. "It will be an exciting time," he promised. The Ambassador welcomed the opportunity to work with Orban once he had won the elections and formed a new government.

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She also highlighted the need for a welcoming business environment.

¶9. (C) Deputy Chief of Mission, who also attended the meeting, expressed appreciation for Fidesz's support for the Bajnai government's decision to accept a Guantanamo detainee and to increase the size of Hungary's Afghanistan contingent. Martonyi said there was broad cross-party consensus on Hungarian foreign policy objectives and that there would be little change from one government to another. (Note: Orban confirmed that he intended to name Janos Martonyi as his Foreign Minister. End Note.)

¶10. (C) COMMENT. Orban, even though he leads by a wide margin in every poll, is clearly obsessed with decisively defeating the Socialists, his long-time nemesis. We expect that, as one of Hungary's shrewdest politicians, this bare-knuckled political brawler will leave nothing to chance as he mobilizes his party faithful in the march to long-awaited victory. Despite Orban's hope for a smaller turnout on election day, lower voting numbers may also favor a stronger showing by Jobbik, reducing Fidesz's chance for a hoped for two-thirds parliamentary majority and increasing the chances that the extreme right may enter Parliament. Kounalakis